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SPEECH BY MR A RAHIM ISHAK, MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
 FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT THE OPENING OF THE HOME ECONOMICS  
 BUILDING AND EXTENSION OF THE SCHOOL TUCKSHOP AT THE  
 ANGLICAN HIGH SCHOOL ON SATURDAY, 30TH JUNE 1973  
 AT 9.00 A.M.

Today is an occasion for triple joy. It is not only the occasion of a fund raising fun fair but also the occasion of the opening of the Home Economics Building and the extension of the school tuckshop. To me, this occasion typifies the spirit of Singapore. Let me explain. Firstly, the opening of the Home Economics Building is an act of achievement. In Singapore we are a meritocracy. We place great value on achievement. The putting up of this building is a tangible proof of your achievement.

Secondly, the extension of the tuckshop is an act of expanding facilities to cater for increasing needs. In Singapore, we are always having to expand our facilities to meet increasing needs. The building of the tuckshop extension shows that you are constantly reviewing and fulfilling your needs. And finally, the raising of funds through the fun fair is one of self-help and planning for the future. Self-help is a fact of life in Singapore where we accept the fact that no one owes us a living. Such a record augurs well for the future not only of your school but of our Republic. It therefore gives me great pleasure to share this happy occasion with you all.

Education does not end with producing literates only. The purpose of education should be to impart knowledge and skills which will enrich our daily life. It is no use teaching physics, if after digesting all the theory a student cannot even repair a fuse. Theorising may be good at a later stage of education but at this early stage the value of teaching things with little practical application raises some doubt. However, in the teaching of home economics there need be no doubt on this score. I can think of no subject whose practical application can affect one's life immediately as home economics.

In the old days girls were kept at home and taught cooking, needlework and sewing, and housekeeping until they were ready to get married and become good housewives. Today, in Singapore, our girls do not stay home until they are old enough to get married. In this situation and with the growing scarcity of servants and increasing cost of living,

the introduction of home economics courses in school is vital if our future generations are going to run their homes properly. The course will enable them to cook well cheaply, to clothe the family well cheaply and to live well cheaply. This itself will make a vital contribution to the good of our country, for citizens who are happy at home are likely to be hardworking and responsible workers contributing their share to the society in which they live and work. I feel strongly that "happy homes make a happy nation".

Traditionally, home economics has been regarded as a subject for girls. But this need not be so at all. Especially in the context of Singapore where there is a growing shortage of servants and an increase in the number of working wives, both men and women are housemakers. After all, there are men among the best known chefs and fashion experts in the world.

Perhaps I might make a suggestion in this direction. You may wish to start a home economics club open to all. This might encourage boys to take an interest in some of the subjects taught in home economics. I feel boys can benefit as much as girls from this course. Another popular concept is that home economics and other practical subjects are only for dullards. There is certainly no basis for such a belief. There is therefore no reason why bright pupils should not take up and benefit from this subject. I hope it proves popular in your school.

There is also another reason why you should be proud of this occasion. Although cookery and needlework had been taught in Singapore schools from the mid 1930s, Singapore only presented her first candidates in Domestic Science in 1951. It was only in 1960 that government schools had special rooms built for teaching the subject. It was only introduced in Chinese schools in 1965 and in Malay schools in 1966. Your school has now joined the ranks of such schools which provide a diversified programme that will prepare well-rounded citizens better able to cope with the needs of the home as well as the demands of society.

The pupils who graduate from this building will not only make better home-makers but will contribute to our growing tourist and fashion industries. But this facet of education should not merely be considered for its utilitarian and economic values. I hope through it the students will become cultured and more sophisticated. Further, I hope that your home economics programme will not confine itself only to teaching but also give pupils the chance to create and experiment. You have a rich

field from which to borrow - our four basic cultures should provide a spring source for many ideas. The most important aspect in education, the spirit of inquiry of the student, can be stimulated to the full in this subject.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all those who have been responsible for the success of your school building and extension schemes. These people deserve special mention as they are making a valuable contribution to the progress of the nation, as do the organisers of this fun fair and bazaar.

Now, with much pleasure, I declare open the Home Economics Building and the Extension of the School Tuckshop, and wish you all an enjoyable day at the fun fair and bazaar.

DATED: JUNE 30, 1973.

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